Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living

2011 Annual Report I am pleased to provide the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living Annual Report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011. The report describes the Department's work in carrying out its mission to make Vermont the best state in the nation in which to grow old or to live with a disability, with dignity, respect and independence; and, highlights some of our biggest accomplishments and most pressing challenges.

Some key individuals moved on in 2011; we are grateful for their lasting contributions to our organization and our mission. Fortunately, the mid-2011 lifting of the freeze on vacancy hires allowed us to begin rebuilding our organization and we have added new talent and strengths to our team.

Highlighted in the report are our high rates of customer satisfaction across multiple divisions; the elimination of a waiting list in 2011 for Choices for Care participants with high needs; the lifting of the freeze on enrolling participants with more moderate needs; decreased utilization of more costly long-term care services; and, an increase of almost 6% in employment outcomes in a very tough job market. Our Adult Protective Service unit faced many challenges but steadfastly continued to tackle the growing problem of adult abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Though technically outside the annual report's timeframe, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge my respect for all the DAIL employees who ensured that Vermonters were served despite Tropical Storm Irene.

Special nods are due to The Irene Emergency Response and Recovery team and to the Deputy Commissioner for managing the move from Waterbury. The recovery team assisted FEMA in insuring accessibility to resources for our core constituents and secured over \$50,000 from the Administration on Aging to assist our aging network (AAAs) in providing the necessary outreach to the most vulnerable and isolated seniors. The resilience of our fellow Vermonters who are rebuilding their homes, their towns and their lives remains a constant source of inspiration and pride. It is a privilege to live in and to work for the state of Vermont.

Susan Wehry, M.D.

Commissioner

Table of Contents

DEPARTMENT MISSION	1
CORE PRINCIPLES	1
VERMONT AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES	
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	2
DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES, AGING, AND INDEPENDENT LIVING	l T
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	3
DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS	4
DIVISIONS	
BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED	7
DISABILITY AND AGING SERVICES	.12
LICENSING AND PROTECTION	.22
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION	28

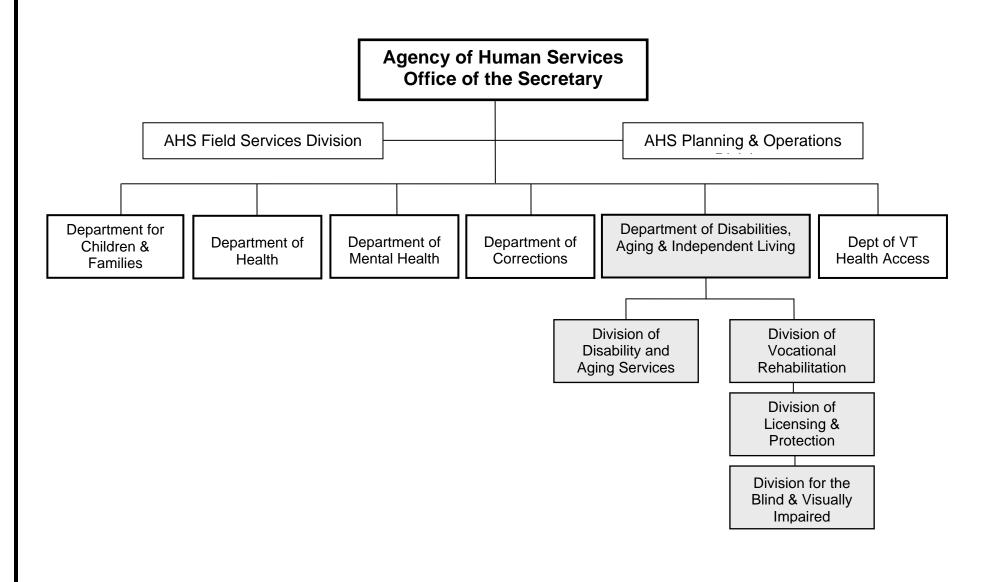
Mission Statement

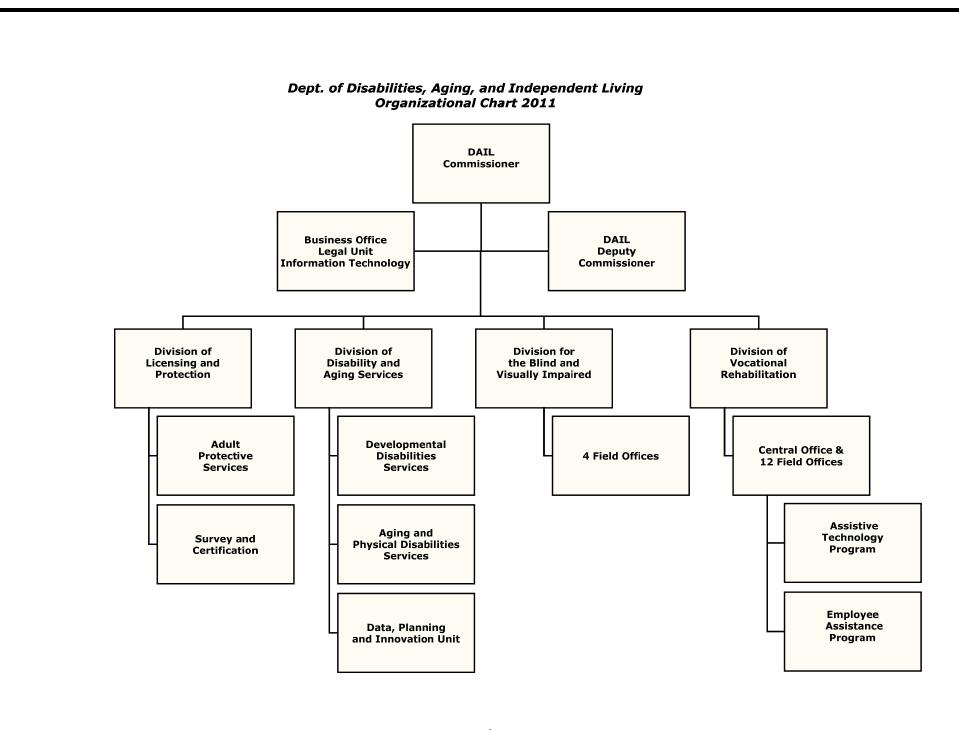
The mission of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability – with dignity, respect and independence.

Core Principles

- Person-centered the individual will be at the core of all plans and services.
- **Respect** individuals, families, providers and staff are treated with respect.
- *Independence* the individual's personal and economic independence will be promoted.
- *Choice* individuals will direct their own lives.
- *Living well* the individual's services and supports will promote health and well-being.
- *Contributing to the community* individuals are able to work, volunteer, and participate in local communities.
- *Flexibility* individual needs will guide our actions.
- *Effective and efficient* individuals' needs will be met in a timely and cost effective way.
- *Collaboration* individuals will benefit from our partnerships with families, communities, providers, and other federal, state and local organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES





Department Highlights 2011

The following descriptions highlight some of the key initiatives in which the Department has and will continue to be involved in and include initiatives that cut across the Agency of Human Services and State Government as a whole. In addition to government agencies, these initiatives also involve collaboration with a variety of community partners.

Creative Workforce Solutions

Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) is an AHS initiative created in 2010 to transform the way all AHS programs interface with employers. The concept came out of work DAIL's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) had been doing to build local employment coalitions among agencies serving people with disabilities, so that contact with employers could be coordinated and placement opportunities shared among agencies. CWS expanded this idea into Local Employment Teams involving all AHS employment programs, which span four separate departments and at least seven divisions within those departments. Each Local Employment Team is facilitated by a Business Account Manager, who is focused on employer outreach and account development and does not carry a caseload. The purpose of CWS is to coordinate and streamline AHS outreach to employers so that employers working with AHS and its customers seeking to enter or return to the workforce will experience improved services and better outcomes.

The official kick-off of the CWS partnership was on July 1st, 2010. Since that time, Business Account Managers have been working with members of their Local Employment Teams and local leadership to strengthen their partnership, reach out to employers, and join together to meet the job placement needs of both employers and participants in AHS services. While data tracking was not fully implemented until July 2011 and data are incomplete for the first year, the CWS partnership served at least 4,100 individuals during SFY 2011. DVR played a leadership role in developing the CWS concept and continues to facilitate and support the partnership. Through CWS, DVR and the Division for the blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) extend their expertise in employment services to many more AHS customers with disabilities or other disadvantages that affect employment.

Integrated Family Services

The goal of the Integrated Family Services (IFS) Initiative is to integrate human services for children, youth and families to create a continuum of services for

families to choose from. Under this model, services will be provided to the family as a whole, not just the child. The decision about which services are provided will be based on the needs of each child, youth and family. Services will be guided by best practices in clinical services, early intervention and family support. One key goal of IFS is to give families the early support, education and interventions that will produce more favorable outcomes in the long-term, including reduced out of home placements, at lower cost. DAIL's Children's Personal Care Services and Developmental Services are involved in this initiative.

'Dual Eligibles' Project

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) has secured a contract with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to develop a demonstration model that will provide more effective integrated care to people who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, often referred to as "dually eligible." A core feature of the proposed design is to integrate Medicare and Medicaid funding, and to use this funding to support flexible person-centered services. The goals are to improve the quality of care, improve health outcomes, control costs, and support Vermont's broad health reform goals. As a demonstration model, Vermont will be able to pilot, or test, the new model, learn what works and what doesn't and make changes to the model to work as well as possible.

In 2008, about 22,000 people were dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. This is a diverse group of people, including many people with significant disabilities, multiple health conditions, and limited incomes. As a group they use high volumes of Medicare and Medicaid services- about five times as many services as the statewide average, totaling about \$560 million.

If the legislature and the federal government approve the demonstration model, it will have an impact on DAIL and many of the people we serve. People who are dually eligible constitute about 91% of the people enrolled in Choices for Care, 78% of the people served in the Attendant Services Program, 68% of the people served in Community Rehabilitation and Treatment, 67% of people served in the Traumatic Brain Injury program, and 64% of people served in Developmental Services home- and community-based services (source: HP Recipient, Third Party Liability and 2010-2011 Paid Claims Universes, 8/10/2011) http://humanservices.vermont.gov/dual-eligibles-project

Health Care Reform

Affordable, comprehensive and quality health care is essential for the well-being of Vermonters. Since 2006, Vermont has enacted many health reforms designed

to increase access, improve the quality, and contain cost of health care for Vermonters. Vermont's health care reform efforts will affect all of us, including the people served by DAIL programs and services.

Vermont's latest legislation, Act 48 (H.202), was signed into law by Governor Shumlin in June 2011. The law recognizes the economic and moral imperative for Vermont to undertake fundamental reform of its health care system. Health care costs have been growing between 6.5 and 8.5 percent per year in recent years, at a time when growth in our economy was negligible. Act 48 puts Vermont on a path to a single payer system, but the state must take several additional steps to reach that goal. These include development of a financing plan that assures a single payer will cost less than the current system. http://hcr.vermont.gov/

Money Follows the Person

DAIL was awarded a Demonstration Grant from CMS for "Money Follows the Person" program in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011. The goal of the grant is to assist qualified people who have been living in a nursing home for 90 days or more and who wish to return to their home or other setting in the community to be able to do so. As part of the planning process for this grant, DAIL looked at the current obstacles that are preventing people from being able to return home. This program allows for creative use of Long Term Care dollars and intensive supports to overcome the obstacles. The program is targeted to be fully operational by July 2012.

Blind and Visually Impaired

802-871-3382 888-405-5005 Toll Free www.DBVI.vermont.gov

Mission and Philosophy

The Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) provides and oversees specialized services for people who are visually impaired using a rehabilitation model that starts when the person experiences vision loss. DBVI offers an array of services specifically designed for people who have lost visual function and independence.

DBVI's mission is to support the efforts of Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired to achieve or sustain their economic independence, self reliance, and social integration to a level consistent with their interests, abilities and informed choices. Those who participate in DBVI services learn skills and become high achieving successful community members. Given appropriate adaptive technology and education, many limitations due to blindness can be overcome. Quality of life, dignity, and full integration are the focus of DBVI.

DBVI practices a rehabilitation model that takes a holistic approach to working with the person at the time of vision loss. The process begins with the person and the DBVI counselor working together to develop an individualized plan aimed at helping him or her to achieve the highest level of independence possible. The rehabilitative process focuses on helping the person adjust to living with a vision loss and to build skills that allow the person to regain self confidence and dignity after the severe trauma of vision loss. DBVI services help people reestablish control and ability to complete independent living tasks that are usually taken for granted, such as preparing breakfast, getting dressed and traveling independently to work.

Success Story

Neil was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor on January 30, 2008. He subsequently lost all vision at age 29. Neil had been working as a math teacher, physical education teacher and residence counselor at a local private school. He was very active in sports and outdoor activities. DBVI provided adjustment

counseling to Neil and assistance for his supportive family, extensive orientation and mobility and rehabilitation teaching services including an in-depth rehabilitation program at the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, Massachusetts. Neil returned from the program and now lives independently in his own apartment in downtown Brattleboro. DBVI provided financial assistance for Massage Therapy School in Rutland and adaptive technology and training to complete his school work. He was hired during the summer of 2011 to provide massages at camps for cancer survivors in several western states. In November Neil was hired as a massage therapist with a local business located within 200 feet of his apartment. Given the multiple challenges Neil has faced over the past 3 years, this positive outcome is the result of his hard work, perseverance, support from family and friends, and taking full advantage of the vocational rehabilitation services provided.

Organizational Structure and Staffing

DBVI services are provided by highly qualified professionals who possess specialized training and understanding of the implications of visual loss. Services are provided from four regional field offices in Montpelier, Burlington, Springfield, and Rutland where rehabilitation counselors and associates are responsible for ensuring that timely and appropriate services are delivered to people with vision loss. One rehabilitation technology trainer covers the entire state, teaching people how to use adaptive technology such as screen readers and screen enlargement computer software. The director of DBVI is located in the Department's central office in Williston.

Programs and Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The goal of DBVI's vocational rehabilitation services is to help people with vision loss to retain, return, or secure employment. Each person meets with a counselor to identify the goals and develop a plan to reduce the limitations that result from a vision loss. In State Fiscal Year 2011 there were 75 individuals who met their employment goals. This is remarkable considering the current economic situation and unemployment rates. Some of the services provided in DBVI's vocational rehabilitation programs include:

- Counseling and guidance
- Assessment of skills, interests, and abilities
- Transition services for students

- Adaptive equipment and technology evaluation and training
- Low vision services
- Orientation and mobility services (Learning to use a white cane)
- Rehabilitation training
- Career exploration
- Vocational training
- Assistance with post-secondary education
- Job-seeking skills
- Employer assistance
- Small business development
- Job placement services
- Coordination of services and access to programs

Transition Services

DBVI transition services provide high school students with opportunities for learning independent living and job skills. DBVI collaborates with several partners including the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI), Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, ReSource, the Gibney Family Foundation and Linking Learning to Life. One specific transition program called LEAP (Learn, Earn, and Prosper) provides paid summer employment for youth in a residential setting. This program empowers students to take charge of their employment future by gaining early employment success that can be carried into future employment pursuits. Having completed the fifth year, the LEAP program has been found to be highly successful, with the goal that all graduates enter college, obtain further training, or join the world of work. A new addition to the summer work experience is the requirement for students to secure internships in their local community. The goal of the internships is to make the connections in the local community where jobs will eventually develop and to expand the summer experience into year-long career exploration.

Independent Living Services

For those people for whom employment is not a feasible goal, but whose independence is challenged by vision loss, DBVI provides assistance in maintaining independence. The DBVI rehabilitation associate will meet with the person in his or her own home to discuss the person's goals and develop a plan for services to maintain the highest possible degree of independence. Plans may address activities such as traveling independently, preparing meals, and identifying medications. Once the individualized plan is developed, the services are provided through a grant agreement with VABVI which receives both federal and state

funds from DAIL to provide services to adults over the age of 55 with visual impairment. Direct services include orientation and mobility, low vision training, and daily living services. From October, 2010 to September, 2011, VABVI provided services to 780 adults with a visual impairment.

Technology

Maximizing the power of adaptive technology is critical to DBVI. DBVI invests significant effort in staying current about new adaptive technology which will revolutionize employment access and eliminate other barriers caused by vision loss. Adaptive technology plays a critical role in allowing a person with a visual impairment to be connected with society, continue employment, and pursue a tremendous range of careers in mainstream society.

Homemaker Services

Although the primary objective is to enable people to work in competitive employment, including self-employment, occupations such as extended employment, homemaking, or unpaid family work may be a person's most appropriate and acceptable choice.

Public Education and Social Integration Events

In October, DBVI and VABVI observed White Cane Safety Day by sponsoring various events across the state to heighten awareness of pedestrians' rights and to provide educational information. Attendees included local and state officials along with community members interested in an experiential learning of what it means to travel without sight.

This summer, DBVI and VT Adaptive Ski and Sports sponsored four regional events to challenge people with vision loss to participate in activities in which they typically may not participate, such as tandem bike riding, kayaking, and sailing.

National Data

Vermont	Number of Eligible Individuals per Million of State Population	Rehabilitation Rate	Percent Working 35 or More Hours per Week	Mean Hourly Wage	Mean Cost per Rehabilitation
DBVI 2010	213	73%	45.1%	\$17.43	\$6,764
Blind Agency National Average 2010	112	63.7%	54.2%	\$14.26	\$7,761

Customer Satisfaction

In SFY 2011, DBVI conducted a Customer Satisfaction survey to which 159 VT DBVI customers responded. The results of the survey show a high level of satisfaction with DBVI services, with satisfaction rates exceeding 90% or greater in most areas, including:

- 92% were very satisfied or satisfied with DBVI's program.
- 92% of clients indicated that they were satisfied with the services they received.
- 89% of clients indicated that the services provided met their expectations.
- 90% of clients indicated that the services provided through the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired compared favorably to the services offered through their ideal program.
- 98% percent of clients would tell their friends with similar disabilities to go to the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired for help.

Disability and Aging Services

802-871-3065 www.ddas.vermont.gov

Mission and Philosophy

The Division of Disability and Aging Services (DDAS) is responsible for all long-term care services for older Vermonters, individuals with developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and physical disabilities. DDAS works with private organizations to provide a broad array of long term services and supports, including:

- Residential Support
- Community Supports
- Respite
- Family Supports
- Employment Supports
- Rehabilitation Services
- Information and Referral

- Caregiver Supports
- Support to Live at Home
- Nutritional Programs
- Assistive Technology
- Guardianship Services
- Crisis Services
- Clinical Interventions
- Personal Care
- Case Management
- Integrated Health Care
- Assistance with Activities of Daily Living
- Nursing Home Level of Care

The Division of Disability and Aging Services supports older Vermonters and Vermonters with disabilities to live as they choose, pursuing their individual goals and preferences within their chosen communities. The Division:

- Seeks to ensure their basic human and civil rights, health, well-being and safety;
- Provides effective leadership for disability and aging policy and services in Vermont;
- Meets federal and state mandates by developing and managing public resources effectively.

Success Story

What a difference one year can make. Last year my brother, Scott, was a resident in a New Jersey nursing home. He uses a wheelchair and was unable to eat anything but pureed foods. He was placed there from a group home for individuals

with cerebral palsy due to increased hospitalizations due to aspiration pneumonia. He was on oxygen support and was considered a risk to aging patients due to an increase in behavior outbreaks. Scott was virtually trapped in the nursing home except for receiving monthly visits from me, his last remaining relative.

I wanted to have Scott live closer to me here in Vermont. After visiting several shared living homes in Rutland County, we found the most amazing match with Vickey. Vickey traveled to Jersey to meet Scott and make sure he was a good fit for her family before the move was made in October 2010. The team from Community Access Program



helped Scott apply for home and community-based services. Not only does he live with Vickey and her family but receives Community Supports as well. Use of an accessible van paired with Vickey's enthusiasm has enabled him to become an active Vermont community member. He and Vickey are out and about, with trips to the store to select ingredients for a cooking project, taking and teaching classes at the Community Campus, going to the library, fishing, boating, attending school performances, volunteering at his church and meeting my husband and me for weekly outings. No grass grows under his feet!

Vickey's experience and patience have brought about incredible physical and emotional improvements. She realized that his adaptive wheelchair was causing pain and was tipping him back, making swallowing even more difficult. A new chair and direct instruction on swallowing have enabled Scott to eat and drink a normal diet with no choking. He has not been sick once since he has come to Vermont. His behavior outbursts and anger have been a challenge but Vickey's skills and support from his team have helped Scott learn to deal with frustration in a healthier way, eliminating the need for behavior management drugs and allowing Scott's enthusiasm and joy for life to emerge once again. This past week Scott joined new friends from his Community Campus music class to sing in the Really Big Show at the Paramount Theater in Rutland. Seeing him up there under the lights singing his heart out "With a Little Help from His Friends" brought tears to my eyes. There is no better image to capture the transformation in Scott's life than that!

--- Louise, sister to Scott

Organizational Structure and Staffing

The Division of Disability and Aging Services (DDAS) is responsible for a full array of long-term care services for Vermonters. To accomplish this, a number of Division staff work in a central office (currently in Williston) with the majority of staff working from regional offices around the state. Staffing includes a Division Director; an Assistant Division Director for Developmental Services; an Assistant Division Director for Aging and Physical Disabilities Services and three administrative staff. Additionally, there are 27 staff with the Office of Public Guardian; 20 Long Term Care Services and Supports staff; 10 Developmental Disabilities Services staff, 4 Older Americans Act staff; and 5 Data and Planning staff.

As suggested by its broad role, the Division maintains partnerships with a wide variety of local organizations, including:

- Adult Day Centers
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Designated Agencies and Specialized Services Agencies
- Home Health Agencies
- Nursing Homes
- Residential Care Homes
- Vermont Associates
- Vermont Center for Independent Living

The Division also has a variety of partners within federal and state government, including:

- Administration on Aging
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- Vermont Department for Children and Families
- Vermont Department of Corrections
- Vermont Department of Education
- Vermont Department of Health
- Department of Vermont Health Access
- Vermont Department of Mental Health
- Division of Licensing and Protection
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Programs and Services

Adult Day Services

Adult day services are community-based non-residential services designed to assist adults with physical and/or cognitive impairments to remain as active in their communities as possible. Adult day centers provide a safe, supportive environment where participants can receive a range of professional health, social and therapeutic services. Adult day services also provide respite, support and education to family members and caregivers. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY '11) 966 people.

Attendant Services Program

The Attendant Services Program (ASP) supports personal care services for adults with severe and permanent disabilities who need physical assistance with activities of daily living (such as bathing, getting dressed and eating) to remain in their homes. Vermonters Served: (SFY '11) 250 people.

Children's Personal Care Services

Children's Personal Care Services (CPCS) is a service designed to help families with the extra care needs of children under the age of 21 who are eligible for Medicaid and have a significant disability or health condition which impacts caregiving needs or the development of self-care skills. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY '11) 2,226 children received services.

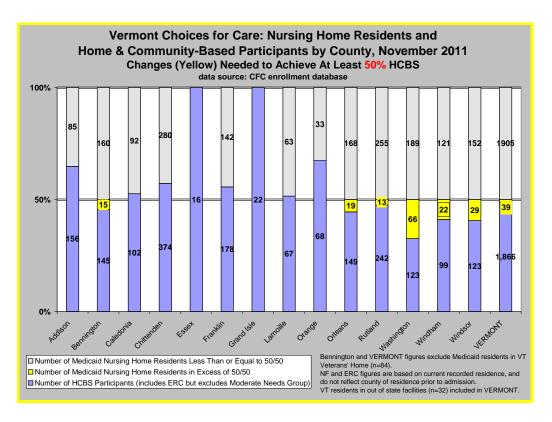
<u>Highlight</u>: Collaborated with Vermont Department of Health, Children with Special Health Needs; Developmental Disability Services and High-Technology Home Care to create the Unit for Children's Health and Support Services (CHASS) within Integrated Family Services, which focuses on the medical, physical and developmental health needs of Vermont's children.

Choices for Care – 1115 Long-Term Care Demonstration Waiver

Choices for Care (CFC) is a Medicaid-funded, long-term care program that pays for care and support for older Vermonters and adults with physical disabilities. The overall goal of Choices for Care is to give people more choice and control over where and how they want to meet their long-term care needs. For people who need nursing home level of care, the program provides help with everyday activities in their own home, in Residential Care/Assisted Living Home, in a Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) program or in a nursing facility. Choices for Care also provides limited funding for homemaker, adult day and case management services to people in the "Moderate Needs Group" who do not need nursing home level of care with the goal that by providing these services, it will

prevent or delay the need for more costly long-term care in the future . <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY '11) 7,441 people (2,543 in home and community-based settings; 487 in Enhanced Residential Care; 129 in PACE; 3,447 in nursing facilities; 835 with Moderate Needs).

The following chart shows Vermont's progress in supporting people in their own homes and communities. In 8 of Vermont's 14 counties, less than 50% of people using Choices for Care Medicaid for their long-term care receive services in a nursing home.



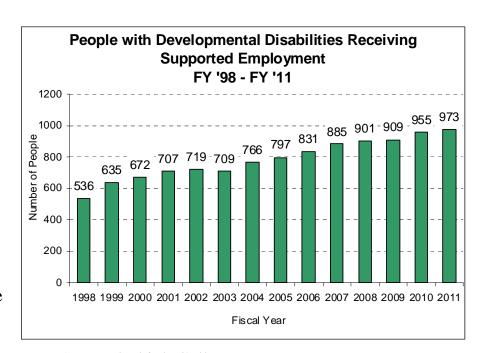
Dementia Respite Grant Program

The dementia respite grant program is managed by Vermont's five Area Agencies on Aging. Dementia Respite Grants give family caregivers the break they need to reduce stress, maintain their well-being and assist them in continuing their caregiving roles. Grants may be used to pay for a range of services such as substitute in-home caregiving, homemaker services or for out-of-home services such as Adult Day services. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY '11) 277 family caregivers.

Developmental Disabilities Services

Developmental disabilities services help provide support to individuals and their families to increase independence and be part of their local communities. These services provide funding to prevent institutionalization and address personal health and safety and public safety. Services support people with developmental disabilities to live dignified lives and find opportunities for community participation though home supports; employment services, community supports, family supports, service coordination, crisis services, clinical interventions, and respite. Vermonters Served: (SFY '11) 2,539 people receiving home and community-based services.

Highlight: Two Designated agencies partnered with the University of Vermont's Think College demonstration grant at UVM and Johnson State College to assist young adults with intellectual disabilities enter college in a fully integrated model. Postsecondary opportunities has become a real and meaningful option for individuals



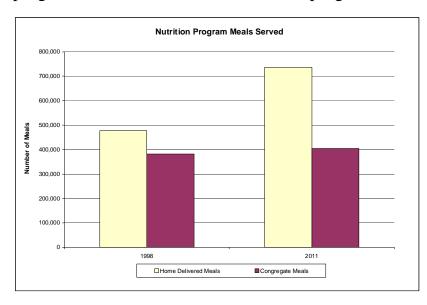
due to the partnership between DAIL and Think College.

Flexible Family Funding

The Flexible Family Funding (FFF) program for children and adults with developmental disabilities helps to support unpaid families as caregiver. Families receive up to \$1,000 per year which may be used at the discretion of the family for services and supports that benefit the individual and family; such as for respite, assistive technology and household needs. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY '11) 1,068 people.

Food and Nutrition Programs

The Older Americans Act supports two programs designed to provide healthy meals and nutrition services for older adults; the congregate, or community, meals program and the home-delivered meals programs, also referred to as Meals on



Wheels. These programs contribute to the food security of older adults and play an important role in promoting good health, preventing disease and lowering rates of disability, hospitalization, depression and mortality.

Meals Served: (FFY '11)

4,587 home delivered meals; 11,219 congregate meals.

The chart shows how the demand for home-delivered meals has increased significantly over time, while the demand for congregate meals has remained relatively steady.

High Technology Home Care

High Technology Home Care (HTHC) provides skilled nursing care to people of any age live in home-based settings and who are eligible for Medicaid and depend on medical technology to survive. Services include coordinating treatments, medical supplies and sophisticated medical equipment. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY'11) 54 people.

Housing and Supportive Services Program

For several years, DDAS has administered several programs designed to support, coordinate and/or develop supportive services in various types of housing to help people maintain their independence and live in the settings they prefer. The goal is to improve systems and infrastructure that support housing for older Vermonters and adults with disabilities, and to collaborate with groups within and outside of State government to assess the status of housing and address unmet needs. In FY'11, DDAS entered into discussions with Cathedral Square Corporation on how to better coordinate the Housing and Supportive Services (HASS) program with

Support and Services and Home (SASH), which is being led by Cathedral Square, with an eye towards integrating them starting in FY'12.

Mental Health Elder Care Clinician Program

The Elder Care Clinician Program (ECCP) provides mental health services to older adults through the collaboration of Vermont's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and the designated mental health agencies. A group of full- and part-time clinicians with expertise in aging and elder mental health provide counseling and support to individuals experiencing mental health problems. Individuals are screened for depression, substance use and cognitive impairment and other mental health issues.

Older Americans Act Services

The Older Americans Act (OAA) provides funding for a range of programs that offer services and opportunities for older Vermonters to remain as independent as possible. The OAA focuses on improving the lives of older adults and family caregivers in areas of social and community services, income, housing, nutrition, health, employment and retirement. At the local level, services are provided or arranged by Vermont's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and include case management; health promotion and disease prevention; information, referral and assistance; legal assistance and family caregiver support. In addition, Senior Employment Services are offered by Vermont Associates for Training and Development. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) 56,765 people (does not include all possible OAA services received).

Public Guardian

The Office of Public Guardian (OPG) provides guardianship and other court-ordered supervision to people with developmental disabilities age 18 and older and older Vermonters age 60 and older when the person is unable to make basic life decisions when there are no friends or family to serve as guardian. Services include guardianship services; representative payee services; case management; court-ordered evaluations for Probate and Family Court guardianship cases; public education on guardianship; and recruitment and support for private guardians. Vermonters Served: (FY '11) 714 adults (622 adults with developmental disabilities though Family Court; 83 adults age 60 and over through Probate Court; 9 Case Management).

State Health Insurance Program

The State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provides information, assistance and problem solving support to Medicare beneficiaries and individuals dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid who need help selecting or managing public and/or

private health insurance benefits. SHIP coordinators can be reached through the Senior HelpLine (1-800-642-5119). <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (SFY '10) 10,353 total contacts assisting people.

Highlight: In 2010, Vermont SHIP was awarded the New England Public Service Award for enrolling the most eligible beneficiaries into the Low Income Subsidy Program (LIS) in the national SHIP Program. LIS provides financial assistance for some Medicare Part D beneficiaries who have limited income and resources. Those who are eligible for this low income subsidy will get help paying for 75% or more of their monthly premium, yearly deductible, prescription co-insurance and co-payments. VT SHIP staff enrolled 98.75% of the eligible population in Vermont.

State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

DAIL contracts with Vermont Legal Aid to operate the statewide Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman. The ombudsmen protect the safety, welfare and rights of older Vermonters who receive long term care in nursing homes, residential care homes, assisted living residences and to Choices for Care participants of any age receiving long-term care services in any of the settings listed above as well as in home- and community-based settings. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) responded to 685 complains (433 were nursing facility-based, 147 were residential care home based, and 105 were home and community based).

Traumatic Brain Injury Program.

The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program diverts and/or returns Vermonters, with moderate to severe traumatic brain injuries, from hospitals and facilities to community-based settings. This is a rehabilitation-based, choice-driven program, intended to support individuals to achieve their optimum independence and help them return to work. Vermonters Served: (SFY '11) 73 people

Other DDAS Highlights:

- During FY 2011, the quality review process was fully implemented to include 46 providers covering a wide spectrum of services, including Developmental Disabilities Services, Choices for Care, Adult Day Centers and the Traumatic Brain Injury waiver program. The quality review process included face-to-face contact with people who receive services, policy, procedure and record reviews, technical assistance and follow-up.
- The Veteran's Directed Home- and Community-Based Services program is a cooperative program between the Veteran's Administration (VA) and the federal Administration on Aging to support home based and consumer directed

- services for veterans who need nursing home care. Working through the Aging and Disabilities Resource Connection (ADRC) grant, DDAS staff pulled together a group composed of representatives from the VA and the ADRC to begin work on this project. All the program components are ready and the program should be operational by early 2012.
- DAIL conducted a Public Safety Risk Assessment of individuals with developmental disabilities who are recognized as posing a threat to public safety (e.g., considered to be a sex offender or to have committed other dangerous offenses such as arson and assault). The risk assessment evaluated the level of risk to public safety of people with developmental disabilities who receive public safety funding. In total, 175 people were assessed. These assessments led to an intensive review of nearly 50 support plans resulting in budget reductions (and savings) of just over \$300,000.

Licensing and Protection

802-871-3317 www.dlp.vermont.gov

Mission and Philosophy

The mission of the Division of Licensing and Protection (DLP) is to ensure quality of care and quality of life to people receiving health care services from licensed or certified health care providers, through the Survey and Certification (S&C) program and to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation, through the Adult Protective Services program (APS).

Success Story

Ms. D worked hard her entire life to ensure that she would have sufficient funds to retire comfortably. Prior to retirement age, Ms. D suffered a 6-month period of severe cognitive impairment due to a medical condition. During this time, a member of her immediate family took advantage of her condition and gained access to her checking account by using fraud and undue influence. With no awareness of what she was doing, Ms. D gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars, nearly half of her life savings, all for the benefit of the family members. Within 48 hours of the report to APS, the investigator secured a specialized Temporary Relief from Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation order from the court on Ms. D's behalf and worked with the bank to freeze her accounts so that no additional funds could be taken and to ensure that she would not be subjected to potential retaliation by the family member. The investigator also conducted a collaborative investigation with law enforcement and a subsequent arrest was made of the offending family member. A recent letter from a fully recovered Ms. D to the investigator expressed her thanks for a prompt and effective response from APS. Ms. D stated her belief that without the assistance of APS, she would have lost everything she had worked a lifetime for and would have been subject to further maltreatment.

Organizational Structure and Staffing

Survey and Certification: S&C is comprised of 14 home-based nurse surveyors. These surveyors are cross trained in both state and federal regulations that govern the health and safety standards for all licensed and/or certified health care facilities.

S&C's management team, the Director, the Assistant Director, the Complaint Coordinator, and the Licensing Chief are also federally qualified surveyors who conduct active complaint and regularly scheduled survey activities when necessary. An important component of Survey and Certification are the Administrative Assistant and Information Technology (IT) program staff that assure facility support for federally required data submission and state licensing activities.

Adult Protective Services: Adult Protective Services is comprised of a Program Chief, an intake and screening program specialist and home-based investigators (10 permanent positions) responsible for investigating allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of Vermont's vulnerable adults. Additionally, investigators work cooperatively with local and state law enforcement when an allegation rises to the criminal level. APS investigators rely on the Program Specialists and administrative support staff for accurate information and communication of complaints while in the field. The Program Chief is also an experienced APS investigator.

Programs and Services

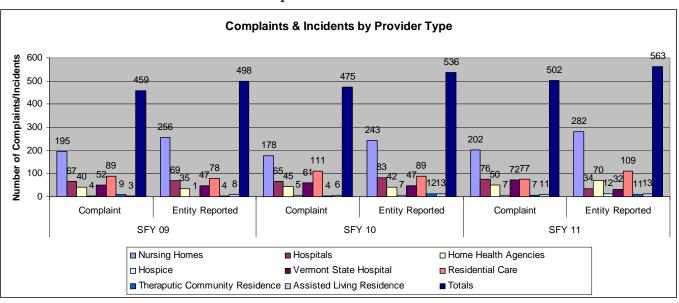
Survey and Certification

Survey and Certification (S&C) provides regulatory oversight of health care facilities and agencies under state and federal regulations. S&C accomplishes this by conducting unannounced on-site visits both routinely and as a result of complaints received. Providers receiving regulatory oversight and/or periodic review include: Nursing Facilities, Residential Care Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, Therapeutic Care Residences, Home Health Agencies, Hospice Programs, Renal Dialysis Units, Ambulatory Surgical Centers, Rural Health Clinics, Acute Care Hospitals, Critical Access Hospitals, Portable X-Ray Units and Intermediate Care Facilities for those with Intellectual Disabilities, Clinical Laboratories, and Rehabilitation or Psychiatric Units.

Highlights of 2011:

• Affordable Care Act: The federal Affordable Care Act includes new mandates to better serve health care facilities and for the public. S&C continues to implement these initiatives, such as the Consumer Friendly Website and Independent Informal Review Process, as directed by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

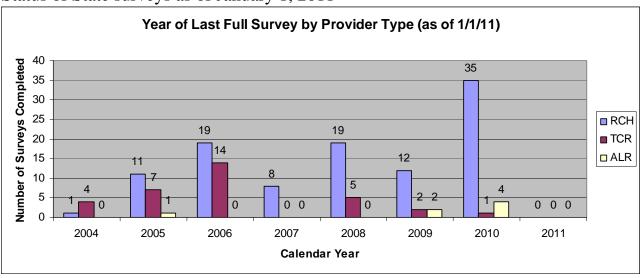
- Consumer Friendly Website: In State Fiscal Year 2011, the DLP redesigned it's website to ensure that those who receive services provided by health care facilities have the most current survey results available for their review. The survey results for health care providers are posted to the DLP website as soon as their plan of correction for deficient practice acceptable.
- Independent Informal Review Process: As mandated by the Affordable Care Act, Survey and Certification is currently developing an Independent Informal Review Process in which providers can contest the accuracy of the surveyor's findings by requesting that an independent panel review pertinent information involving the situation referred to in the statement of deficiencies. Survey and Certification is partnering with the Vermont Health Care Association, which represents Vermont nursing homes, residential care homes, assisted living and other residences, and the State Long Term Care Ombudsman's office, which represents the interests of people receiving long-term care services, to refine the process which is to go into effect on January 1, 2012.
- **Responding to Complaints:** Recent years have brought an upward trend in complaints reported to S&C. DLP has been successful in responding within required timeframes to the most acute complaints received that allege an immediate threat to the health and safety of people who receive health care for all of the provider types and has made progress in keeping current with moderate and low level complaints received.



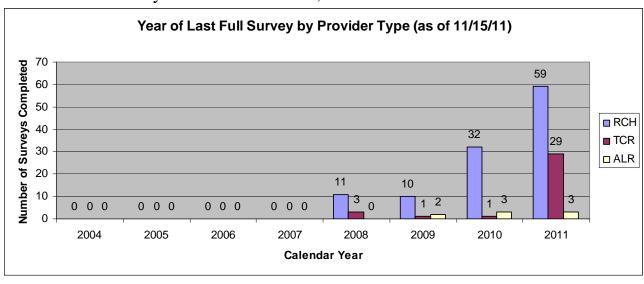
• **Surveys:** Due to staff vacancies and turnover in recent years, S&C had been unable to conduct all regularly scheduled onsite surveys of state-licensed residences which include Residential Care Homes (RCH), Therapeutic

Community Residences (TCR), and Assisted Living Residences (ALR). S&C is now fully staffed and has made dramatic progress in surveying these residences on a more routine basis. With current staffing levels, statelicensed residence survey completion in Calendar Year 2011 indicates that S&C will have the ability to conduct bi-annual surveys for Vermont's statelicensed residences.

Status of State surveys as of January 1, 2011



Status of State surveys as of November 15, 2011



Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a cornerstone of Vermont's system for protecting vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and/or exploitation. The investigative and protection activities of APS are governed by Chapter 69 of Title 33 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated and include a variety of services to investigate reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation, address identified problems or prevent further abuse from occurring.

The goals of APS are to promptly and thoroughly investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation, to increase awareness of adult abuse in all of its forms, to provide information about alternatives and services for vulnerable adults who are the victims of abuse and to increase the reporting of suspected abuse. Reports can be made to APS in a variety of ways, but one of the easiest ways is to report suspected abuse by calling the DLP reporting and complaint toll-free number at 1.800.564.1612. In conducting investigations and arranging protective services, APS makes every effort to respect the wishes of the vulnerable adult. This report includes recent data about APS investigations of abuse, neglect and exploitation along with associated budget information.

Protective Services: During the course of an investigation APS is also responsible for determining whether the victim is in need of protective services. While APS does not provide direct care or case management services, it frequently refers people to a variety of other service providers, including Area Agencies on Aging, Home Health Agencies, local mental health and developmental services providers, the Vermont Center for Independent Living, the Office of Public Guardian, Disability Rights Vermont, the State Long Term Care Ombudsman and local and state law enforcement.

APS Registry: APS maintains a confidential Adult Abuse Registry of persons who have substantiated findings of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. The registry can be checked by DLP staff on behalf of employers for either prospective or current employees and for either volunteer or paid employees as required by statute. Licensed and certified health care providers are prohibited from hiring direct care workers whose names appear on the registry. APS uses an online screening system to streamline the background checks for both APS and the Department for Children and Families' Child Abuse Registry for employers required to conduct both types of checks. Currently there are 985 names on the registry. In State Fiscal Year 2011, APS conducted 39,726 registry checks.

Community Education: APS is also involved in on-going activities to increase public awareness on abuse, including what to watch for and what to report. In addition, these education programs are geared toward increasing awareness of problems that vulnerable adults face and providing training in abuse prevention efforts. Audiences include citizen groups, nursing homes, hospitals, Home Health Agencies, Area Agencies on Aging, residential care homes, adult day centers, providers of services to people with disabilities, and enforcement agencies.

Highlights:

During SFY 11 APS received 2537 unduplicated reports. Embedded in those reports were 1673 reports closed during the screening process. 55 new names were added to the APS registry.

Vocational Rehabilitation

802-871-3068 www.vocrehab.vermont.gov

Mission and Philosophy

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) serves people with disabilities in Vermont who face barriers to employment. DVR's mission is to help Vermonters with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain meaningful employment and to help employers recruit, train and retain employees with disabilities. Consumer choice and self-direction are core values that drive DVR's approach to providing services and developing new programs. DVR also believes in collaborating with other service providers to reach people facing the greatest challenges to employment. As a result, DVR has created innovative partnerships to serve youth, offenders, veterans, people receiving public benefits, and those who need ongoing support in order to work.

DVR's ability to help jobseekers succeed in finding and keeping jobs hinges on how well DVR meets the needs of the employers. Realizing this, DVR revised its mission statement in 2008 to acknowledge employers as a dual customer of DVR services. DVR also began to transform how it interacted with employers. An important step was bringing employment staff from many different agencies together in local coalitions. The goal was to foster information-sharing on job opportunities among employment staff and streamline contacts with employers. This set the stage for Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS), an Agency of Human Services (AHS) initiative that builds on DVR's initial work and in which DVR plays an important facilitating role.

DVR views its commitment to consumer choice, innovative programs, and recognition of having dual customers as key to its high performance and high national rankings among VR programs.

Success Story

Sara came to DVR in September 2010. She was 26 years old, had a four year old child, and had spent the last four years on Reach-Up benefits. She struggled with severe anxiety, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and substance abuse in remission. Her VR Counselor did an in-depth interview with Sara and some vocational testing. Based on this information and consultation with Sara's

therapist, she and Sara developed a plan for employment doing office work. She then had Sara work with VABIR employment staff to help find employers willing to provide job trials for Sara to gain skills and confidence needed for her to work successfully. Over the next six months, three different employers provided work trials. In all three trials, Sara was rated high for her organizational abilities. Employers found her to be a quick learner and good with computer work. The third employer was willing to turn the position into a permanent job if Sara's work trial was successful, and in fact hired Sara in September 2011 at the end of the trial period. A month later, she was given a 50% raise up to the union wage scale.

Many people played a role in this successful outcome for Sara. First of all, Sara herself made good use of the support available from DVR and VABIR. She stayed actively involved and benefited from their encouragement. Economic Services, DVR and VABIR worked throughout as a team with several group planning sessions. The VABIR staff who developed work trials and employers who provided them were also key. They gave Sara the opportunity to test, develop, and prove herself in the workplace. And finally, Economic Services offered excellent support, offering to pay for a full set of dentures to address Sara's severe dental problems and help improve her health and self-image.

Organizational Structure and Staffing

DVR delivers direct employment services to Vermonters and employers through 12 district field offices staffed by Masters-level vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors. These counselors are supported by a team of business account managers, benefits counselors, case aides, and contracted employment consultants and Social Security specialists. DVR also houses the Vermont Assistive Technology Program and Invest EAP Employee Assistance Program.

Programs and Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

DVR services to jobseekers are voluntary and free. Any Vermonter may be eligible if they have a disability that is a barrier to work and they need DVR services to become or remain employed. Services are tailored to the person and driven by his or her own interests, job goals and needs. Each person meets regularly with his or her VR counselor, who helps the person develop an individualized plan for employment and manages the services and supports needed to realize his or her career goals. The core services of vocational assessment,

counseling and guidance, job training, placement and support provided by DVR staff and partners are enhanced with a range of purchased services and supports.

Placement Services

VR counselors have long benefitted from having dedicated employment staff to provide job development, placement and workplace supports to help people find and keep jobs. DVR has longstanding partnerships with all the Designated and Specialized Services Agencies that deliver community mental health and developmental services throughout Vermont to provide supported employment services to individuals with significant disabilities. DVR also has an ongoing partnership with Vermont Association of Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation (VABIR) to provide employment services to DVR customers. Through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS), these employment services have been extended to a new set of case managers outside the VR world. For the first time, Probation and Parole officers and Family Services coordinators for youth transitioning out-ofstate custody now have VABIR employment staff to call on. And the people these case managers serve now have dedicated specialists to help them navigate the world of work. CWS also includes employment staff from the Vermont Department of Labor and Vermont Adult Learning that serve Reach-Up participants.

Employer Services

Employers are key customers of DVR and CWS services. When DVR and CWS work with jobseekers to assess their interests and skills, provide vocational training, and guide them towards promising job opportunities, employers benefit in the end. A unique service DVR and CWS can offer employers is subsidized work trials that minimize the risk to an employer in trying out a worker with a disability or other disadvantages. These "alternative placements" provide a risk-free opportunity for employers and jobseekers to work together toward a successful job match. Alternative placements include several progressive employment options, such as job shadows, work experiences, on-the-job training, and temp-to-hire arrangements. Vermont businesses value the work DVR does to pre-screen and recommend qualified candidates, and give both a risk-free chance to test out a job. They also value the increased coordination and streamlining offered through CWS.

Other Support Services to Jobseekers and Employers

DVR capitalizes on its disability expertise and assessment skills in other ways to help Vermonters and employers. For people with disabilities who need additional stability in their lives before engaging in employment, DVR offers assistance with Social Security disability applications through its Social Security Application

Assistance Program. And for those already receiving Social Security disability benefits, DVR offers Benefits Counseling services to help beneficiaries overcome SSA disincentives to employment so they can return to work and reduce their reliance on public benefits. In addition, DVR is an important resource to employers for identifying valuable tax benefits, consulting on the Americans with Disabilities Act and workplace accessibility, and providing assistive technology and employee assistance program services to help employers retain workers with disabilities.

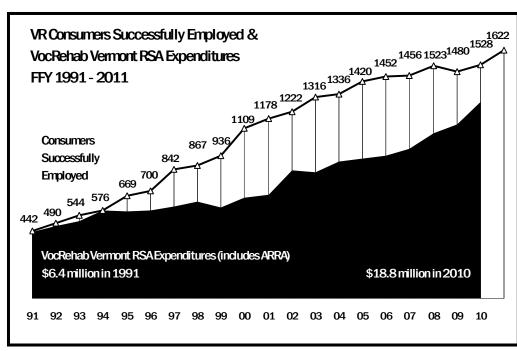
Fiscal Year 2011 Performance and Program Highlights

The success story above illustrates how DVR's services and collaborative partners come together to achieve employment outcomes for Vermonters with disabilities. In addition to DVR's general Vocational Rehabilitation program, which includes everyone served by a VR counselor, DVR has many special programs that extend or enhance these services to meet the unique needs of different populations.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program: The DVR program continues to grow, as does the number of Vermonters with disabilities who are successfully employed each year as a result of DVR services. After a brief dip in successful outcomes during FFY 2009, DVR quickly rebounded and hit its highest count ever this year. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) 10,305 cases were open during the year, serving 9,977 people.

<u>Highlight</u>: DVR had successful employment outcomes with 1,622 (60%) of the 2,713 individuals who closed their cases with DVR in FFY 2011 after having developed a plan for employment. This is nearly 100 more rehabilitations than the

prior year, and a major accomplishment during tough economic times.



Supported Employment Program: DVR customers with significant disabilities sometimes need ongoing support to maintain employment in the competitive job market. In supported employment, a job coach helps the worker to learn or perform job duties. The coach can also help ensure ongoing success by arranging for transportation, assistive technology, special training, or tailored supervision. DVR contracts with roughly 40 programs in community-based mental health and developmental disability agencies for supported employment services to DVR customers. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (FFY '11) 1,276 people with severe mental illness and behavioral disabilities, developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injury.

<u>Highlight</u>: DVR's supported employment contracts have been converted into performance-based contracts that set a consistent standard for employment across all programs. The new structure provides bonuses for achieving high employment rates and penalties for failing to make adequate progress in meeting the standard. It measures and credits employment across the entire population served by each program, not just those enrolled with DVR and getting supported employment. In this way, employment is promoted as an overall agency goal.

Jump On Board for Success (JOBS) Program: The JOBS program is an innovative supported employment and intensive case management service for youth ages 16–21 with severe emotional disturbance that uses work as a means to meet this challenging population. These youth are out of school or seriously at risk of dropping out and are at high risk for involvement with Corrections, substance abuse, homelessness, physical abuse or abusive behaviors, or other concerning behaviors. JOBS programs in 14 sites offer career exploration and job placement; mental health treatment including substance abuse; and help completing high school education, learning independent living skills, and getting and keeping health insurance and housing. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) 543 youth under age 22.

<u>Highlight</u>: Performance measures for JOBS Program contracts incorporated health and well-being outcomes such as participants receiving substance abuse screenings and accessing a primary care physician, which are potential barriers to employment.

Youth in Transition Program: Since 2001, DVR has steadily expanded the availability of staff dedicated to serve youth. The initial focus was on developing DVR Transition Counselors to enhance outreach and integration with schools and provide the progressive work experiences (described in the employer services section of this report) and post-secondary educational opportunities youth need to succeed in the transition to adulthood. DVR Transition Counselors now serve all

60 Vermont high schools and typically focus on youth still in school and under age 21. DVR's current emphasis is on expanding Youth Employment Specialists (YES) capacity. The YES provides intensive supports to youth and employers as they interact while the youth moves along the path from early career exploration, pre-employment training, work experiences, through to competitive job placement. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) 3,350 youth had open cases this year. Of these, 2,321 were served by DVR Transition Counselors.

<u>Highlight</u>: In FFY 2012, YES staff capacity will be added for four DVR Transition Counselors in pilots that are being evaluated by TransCen, a nationally recognized leader in youth transition services policy and research. The YES model is also central to the new CWS Family Services pilot program in Rutland and Newport to serve youth transitioning out of state custody.

Reach-Up Program: DVR has partnered with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) since 2001 to help Vermonters with disabilities receiving financial assistance under Reach-Up, Vermont's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Recipients with a disability that is a barrier to employment are referred by DCF to DVR for services, where they are assigned to a specialized VR counselor who also serves as the person's Reach-Up case manager. A single counselor then provides all services, blending the resources of both DVR and DCF to provide intensive vocational services and case management. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) 896 Reach-Up participants by specialty DVR Reach-Up Counselors; 407 by general VR counselors.

<u>Highlight</u>: CWS has helped foster improvements in the referral process and triage of Reach-Up cases. As part of CWS, DVR is now managing grants to all employment service providers serving Reach-Up participants with work requirements: VABIR, Vermont Department of Labor (DOL) and Vermont Adult Learning (VAL). An assessment team triages participants to Vermont DOL for immediate employment search, to DVR and VABIR if disability is a barrier to working or to VAL if more career preparation and stability is needed before embarking on a job search.

General Assistance Program: The Department for Children and Families' (DCF's) General Assistance (GA) program is intended to be an emergency source of basic needs support for people without dependent children. People must reapply every month and document their inability to work. Unfortunately, many people come to rely on GA as an ongoing source of income (paid with 100% State General Funds), while they struggle with homelessness, undiagnosed or untreated

disabilities, and extreme poverty. A few years ago, DCF contracted with DVR's Social Security Application Assistance Program to help GA participants apply for SSA disability benefits. In February 2011, DCF expanded DVR's role in the GA program significantly. In the new system, initial GA applications are processed by Community Action Programs, but after the first month of benefits, applicants are required to go to DVR for ongoing GA assistance and to participate in vocational preparation and placement, apply for Social Security disability benefits, or a combination of both. Six DVR GA Counselors provide vocational counseling and case management, and triage cases into an employment track or SSA disability application track. Eight contracted VABIR employment staff assist in processing the monthly applications, issue GA benefits, arrange transportation appointments, and help people in job placement activities and employment support once placed. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) DVR GA Program staff has helped 1,082 people with GA benefits; 182 people have been opened with DVR for employment services.

<u>Highlight</u>: When the DVR GA Program began, there were an estimated 750 long-term GA participants. As of October 2011, the overall count of long-term participants for GA was down to 588. Fifty-seven people were moved off GA benefits through employment. Another 123 were moved off GA through securing SSA disability benefits.

Offender Re-Entry Employment Services (ORES) Program: Employment is critical in helping offenders successfully reenter their communities and avoid reoffending. DVR has worked closely with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to serve offenders with disabilities both within and outside of correctional facilities. Designated VR counselors in each district office to serve as a single point of contact for DOC. In addition, DVR has had a program in Burlington, jointly funded by DVR and DOC, to provide employment services to offenders. In SFY 2011, this program served as the model for an expansion of services through CWS to offenders in other parts of the state. Five additional sites were phased in during SFY 2011. Community High School of Vermont (CHSVT) vocational coordinators provide initial assessment and preparatory work before referring people for community-based employment services. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) 661 individuals were served who were referred to DVR through DOC staff or were under Corrections supervision.

<u>Highlight</u>: Stakeholders in the new CWS ORES sites—including CHSVT, Probation and Parole, Community Justice Centers, Vermont Works for Women, DVR, and VABIR—are providing intensive employment support that was

previously unavailable in these communities. In FFY '11, 398 people with corrections involvement received CWS employment services.

Progressive Employment Program: Alternative placements such as job shadows, work experiences, on-the-job training, and temp-to-hire arrangements are progressive employment options that provide jobseekers and employers a chance to test out employment in a risk-free environment. The Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Stimulus funding gave a huge boost to progressive employment options for DVR customers with an infusion of resources to support short-term subsidies to employers and incentive allowances to jobseekers. DVR has continued the program with DVR funds and CWS is also making it a priority to secure similar resources for non-VR participants. Vermonters Served: Over 1,024 people with disabilities have participated since the program was initiated in 2009 with ARRA funds.

<u>Highlight</u>: An independent evaluation of DVR's progressive employment program found that earnings of participants were about three times those of nonparticipants with similar characteristics—a difference resulting from two outcomes: nearly twice as many program participants were employed during this study period and, among the individuals who were employed, participants' earnings were about 60 percent higher.

Social Security Application Assistance Program: People with disabilities serious enough to qualify for Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits often rely on other benefits such as Reach-Up and General Assistance (GA) because the SSA application process is so onerous and denials are common. Shifting these people to SSA benefits brings greater income stability and access to health care benefits that can be a critical foundation for eventual movement into employment. It also preserves State resources for those who have no other option than Reach-Up and GA. In fact, the State can be reimbursed by SSA for benefits paid out if the person is found eligible for SSA benefits for the same period.

In working with Reach-Up, GA, and offender populations, DVR has found many people with severe disabilities that have never been properly diagnosed or treated. While employment is the goal, it may not be a viable option yet. Stability comes first. To address this need, DVR joined with DOC, SSA, and DCF to create a process for helping AHS customers with significant disabilities to secure SSA disability benefits. Based on a triage assessment by VR counselors, appropriate candidates are referred to DVR's Social Security Specialists who help applicants prepare for and complete the application and appeals process. The customer's

connection with DVR and Benefits Counseling services is also established, to keep the door open for employment. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (FFY '11) 1,441 people were helped with SSA applications.

<u>Highlight</u>: When DVR's new GA Program started in February 2011, it expanded use of DVR's SSA Application Assistance Program for GA participants. Since then, the State has recouped over \$338,000 from SSA for GA benefits paid out.

Benefits Counseling Program: Vermont is a leader in promoting employment among Social Security beneficiaries who have the most serious disabilities and face the greatest disincentives to working. DVR has dedicated benefits counselors who advise SSA participants on available work incentive programs and help them manage benefits as they transition into employment, increase their income and gradually reduce their dependence on public benefits. <u>Vermonters Served</u>: (FFY '11) 1,457 people were served, including 608 new enrollees. About 100 other people received brief information and referral services, without having a case opened.

<u>Highlight</u>: DVR's research paper in collaboration with SSA on the results of Vermont's SSDI Benefits Offset Pilot Demonstration appeared in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Rehabilitation* in the Spring 2011 issue. The successor of this pilot is the Benefits Offset National Demonstration, a large-scale random assignment study in which Vermont DVR is also participating.

Assistive Technology Program: Assistive Technology (AT) includes an array of tools—from low- to high-tech devices—to support people in achieving and maintaining greater independence at home, school, work, and in the community. Adapted utensils, switch-activated appliances, screen enlargers, and even applications for communicating through an Apple iTouch are just a sampling of the technologies available. The mission of the Vermont Assistive Technology Program (VATP) is to increase awareness and knowledge of AT, and to promote policies and practices to ensure AT is available to Vermonters with disabilities. VATP serves people with disabilities, family members, educators, employers, and others. Services include:

- AT information and assistance
- Public awareness activities
- Hands-on demonstrations
- Short term equipment loans
- AT device and software training
- Equipment reuse and recycling

- Technical assistance to organizations setting up AT equipment programs
- Specialized workshops, seminars, group trainings, and technical presentations
- Advocacy and information about rights to AT services

<u>Vermonters Served</u>: (FFY '11) VATP reached 6,816 people through public awareness activities, provided information and assistance to 1,222 Vermonters, conducted device demonstrations for 543 participants, and loaned equipment to 110 different people.

<u>Highlight</u>: The Autism Puzzle Foundation, administered by VATP, is a Vermont private nonprofit that provides funding for AT equipment and services for children aged 18 years and younger. In FFY 2011, \$30,000 in equipment and services were provided to 106 Vermont families who could not otherwise afford them.

Vermont Assistive Technology Reuse Project: Since 2008, a major focus for VATP has been facilitating equipment recycling through its Assistive Technology Reuse Project, a partnership with the Vermont Family Network. The project helps maximize availability and affordability of AT for Vermonters and extend the useful life of AT devices. It has three components:

- **1.** The GetATstuff website (<u>www.getATstuff.com</u>) is part of a regional web-based exchange program bringing together owners of AT that is no longer needed with people seeking new or used AT devices for themselves or others.
- **2. Vermont AT School Swap** (<u>www.Vermont.ATschoolswap.com</u>) is a similar web exchange for public school districts that helps them buy, sell, and share AT equipment purchased for Vermont students that is no longer being used. Currently, 34 of the 60 Supervisory Unions/Districts are participating, with potential for significant savings.
- **3.** The Medicaid Equipment Reuse Project focuses on reuse of communication devices and specific durable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, standers and lifts. Equipment is labeled by vendors and beneficiaries of the equipment agree to return it to Medicaid when no longer needed.

<u>Vermonters Served</u>: (FFY '11) Over \$463,092 was saved for Vermonters this year, including over \$72,857 from Medicaid retrieval exchanges and \$19,467 in Vermont school exchange program savings. Since FFY 2008, the Assistive Technology Reuse Project has saved Vermonters \$1,447,707 for an investment of less than \$70,000 per year.

<u>Highlight</u>: The Vermont Assistive Technology Reuse Project was a Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence award winner during SFY '11.

Employee Assistance Program: Many individuals with disabilities are already working. When personal or workplace problems arise that pose a challenge to continued employment, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides those individuals with immediate access to confidential help to ensure their continued success in employment. Employers widely embrace the program statewide, particularly because it helps all of their employees—not only those with disabilities—ensuring a healthy and productive workforce. The EAP greatly improves DVR's relationships with employers in the private sector. The program's prevention-oriented focus also minimizes employee stress and accidents and thus prevents disabilities and chronic illness. Vermonters Served: (FFY '11) Over 9,000 employees attended EAP events, including 2,664 who were provided individual counseling; 308 managers who were provided workplace consultations; 434 people who attended critical incident debriefings following trauma in the workplace; 670 employees who attended 42 wellness workshops; 452 supervisors who attended 52 supervisor trainings, well over 1,500 members who accessed resources on our website, and many others who attended other EAP events.



Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living 103 South Main Street, Weeks Building Waterbury VT 05671-1601 www.dail.vermont.gov

This report is available in alternative formats upon request.